

Cherry Tree Presbyterian Church
Cherry Tree, Pennsylvania

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Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 5-Pennsylvania

Historic American Buildings Survey
J. Howard Hicks, District Officer
134 East 10th Street, Erie, Pennsylvania

CHERRY TREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Cherry Tree Township, Venango County, Pennsylvania

Owner (or Custodian).

Cemetery Association of Cherry Valley, Cherry Tree Township.

Date of Erection
1837.

Architect
Not known.

Builder
Elijah Stewart.

Present Condition
Good.

Number of Stories:
One. Height about 15'.

Materials of Construction:
White pine, sandstone.

Other Existing Records:
Deeds, Information from residents of the locality.

Additional Data:
Bibliography-Illustrated History of Pennsylvania by William
H. Egle, M.D., published by DeWitt C. Goodrich and
Co., 1876, Harrisourg, Pennsylvania.

History of Venango County, Chicago, Illinois, published
by Brown, Runk and Co., 1890.

CHERRY TREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Cherry Tree Township, Venango County, Pennsylvania

The first permanent settler of Cherry Tree Township, Venango County, Pennsylvania was William Reynolds, an Englishman by birth, who came to America with his son John, and bought a 400 acre tract on Cherry Tree Run, including the site of Cherry Tree Village and the Cherry Tree Presbyterian Church. This plat was purchased in 1797. William Reynolds was very broad-minded but an adherent of the Baptist Church.

In 1802 Elijah Stewart a tanner, born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, came to Venango. Shortly thereafter, he had a tannery and later married Lydia, the daughter of William Reynolds. They had a large family and through Mr. Stewart's efforts the Cherry Tree Presbyterian Church was erected.

The first meetings of this church were held in a school house in the grove opposite to where the church now stands. In 1837 the present church was erected and has continued in use to the present time. The Cherry Tree Presbyterian Church was organized February 1, 1837 by Revs. G. W. Hampson and West. The first communion was administered June 25, 1837 by Rev. G. W. Hampson. The present frame church building was erected about the time of organization, mostly through the efforts of Elijah Stewart, and assistance and contributions of William Reynolds.

The church was organized with fifteen members, as follows- John and Nanoy Rand, Samuel Irwin, Mrs. Jane Irwin, Mrs. Lydia Stewart, Mrs. Nancy Irwin, Mrs. Margaret Irwin, Mrs. Eliza T. Irwin, Mrs. Sally Hamilton, Mrs. Eliza Irwin, Lydia C. Stewart, John Irwin, Mrs. Ann Irwin, Isaac Archer and Mary Prather. John Rynd and John Irwin were ordained elders March 15th, 1837. Ninian Irwin, M.P. Barker, John Rynd, Jr., were ordained October 14th, 1854. Lyman Stewart, William S. Reynolds, John Cheesman, ordained December 30th, 1860. George W. Stevenson, William S. Irwin ordained January 7, 1871, as elders. The ministers were Revs. S. W. Hampson, William Ottinger, John Montgomery, J. McMasters, W. C. Burchard, William Elliott, James F. Reed, I. W. McVitty, Robert Murray,

At present the Cherry Tree Presbyterian Church is used as a chapel for the cemetery which is located directly to the north, same plot of ground. In 1911 William M. N. Hayes donated 11 acres of land for a local cemetery. The trustees of the church, Washington Stevenson and W. S. Reynolds signed off to the cemetery association. There have been no regular church services in the church since 1911. This church formerly had a very large congregation, and the grove opposite the church was used as a hitching place for the horses. The grounds at one time were enclosed by a wrought iron fence, of which a portion is still standing. The church has a seating capacity of about 300 people. It is located in Cherry Tree

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Village, Cherry Tree Township, Venango County, Pennsylvania,
about one half mile north of Cherry Tree proper.

This church has followed the Bible instruction, -inasmuch as it is set on a hill, and is a genuine picture of the very early pioneer days, plain, substantial and thoroughly in keeping with early construction. The walls of the church are about $4\frac{1}{2}$ " thick, and the ceiling height is 13' 8" in the center. Random width floor boards 5" to 7". The width of the church is 41' 4" inside measurement, the length 49' 4". The platform for the pulpit is in two tiers 12' 9" in length for the lower tier and 11' 6" in width. The second or top tier is 10' 5" by 6' 0".

The pulpit is a colonial wooden and evidently home-constructed one. A large Bible is still in use for the services. This is a Bible of the American Bible Society printed in 1834. On the inside front leaf is written-"Presented to Cherry Tree Presbyterian Church by Mary Reynolds, January 1840." The original organ, (an organ of the cottage type, with power supplied by foot-pressure of the performer,) is also still in use.

The platform has rounded corners. Directly back of the pulpit is a large, triple, central window with an elliptical top. It is a two sash window of twelve lights each, 8" x 10". These sash are enclosed by flat, fluted mullions $7\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. Outside of these mullions are side lights, six on each side 8" x 10" with a plain wooden casing over all. The elliptical transom is enclosed by a plain moulding, and has a small wooden keystone at the top center. The outside of this window is a duplicate of the inside, except that the sill and stool differ, the wainscoting cap forming the window stool and the inside has a small wall bracket on each side of the window for holding oil lamps. Altogether there are four small brackets for lamps in the entire church, one on either side wall and two at the rear of the pulpit. There are also fixtures over each aisle for oil lamps.

The floor is raised $1\frac{3}{4}$ " on all pew sections and the platform. The pews are straight, plain box pews with center partition, and formerly had doors to each pew hung on hinges, which have been removed because of the noise made by opening and closing them during services. There are no racks for hymnals, nor kneeling benches.

Entrance doors are on each side of the church near the pulpit. There are no vestibules. The ceiling is elliptical, 13' 8" high in the center. There are four, square pilasters on

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each side, and one in each corner, two on each end. The glass in the windows is plain, clear glass, some of it the old wavy glass which undoubtedly has been in the windows many years.

The wall is wainscoted 3' 8½" high, with matched boards 10" to 16" random widths. Directly back of the platform the wainscoting is 4' high. These boards are used horizontally. The two pilasters back of the pulpit are about 13' high, spaced 12' 9" apart, and enclose the rear wall behind the pulpit. They are plain with a crown moulding. There are two corner half pilasters 9' 4" in height. The church is of barn frame construction. The trusses above the ceiling are of heavy timber construction. On both the east and west sides of the building are three windows and a double entrance door. The north side has two windows and two doors, one door below and one upper door in the gable. The lower door is of recent construction.

A flat sandstone imbedded in the ground is placed before each doorway, length about 5', width 2'. The double door is 3' 6½" wide and 7' 6" high and each door has four panels of different widths. There is a large panel at the bottom with three other panels of approximately 6", 8" and 10" above. The doorway is enclosed by flat pilasters. The entablature is out of the ordinary, a delightful composition.

The belfry is square 6' x 6' height 11'. It has a wooden siding base of matched boards 2' high. The top about even with the comb of the roof. The head of the louvre frame has an elliptical arch, is shuttered and in two sections. The top section occupying about 2/3 of the space and the bottom section 1/3 of the space. The mouldings of the top of the belfry match those of the top of the center window. The belfry has a hip roof.

The last Presbyterian pastor was Robert Murry of Titusville, Pennsylvania. The parsonage of this church was located on the Petroleum Center Road, and was reached by climbing up or down a steep, stony road, over which in rainy weather, streams large and small ran down cutting deep ruts and gullies. The parsonage was built about the year 1840 and is a quarter of a mile from the McKinney highway to the east.

It is a colonial style in fair condition, two stories, cellar and attic. A deed gives the transfer of this property February 15th, 1864, Margaret Irwin to W. C. Birchard. The living room is decorated with the same style horizontal wainscoting as is used in the church.

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No especial historical events connected with this church. Several soldiers, pioneers and other local celebrities have been interred in the grave yard, connected with the Cherry Tree Presbyterian Church, among whom were the following-
Ninian Irwin died August 10, 1826 ae 52-2-13
James Hamilton died February 15, 1837 ae 83
John Irwin died December 23, 1838 ae 71
Richard Hamilton born March 10, 1784 died December 18, 1844
Elijah Stewart died August 14, 1847 in 65th year
Louis Masson, a native of Rigny la Salle, department de la Meuse, France, died February 15, 1852 ae 73-8-26
William Richey died July 30, 1855 ae 74
Isaac Walls died March 3, 1856 ae 83-6-14
Richard Irwin died September 25, 1857 ae 71-11-13
Isaac Archer died March 11, 1861 ae 70-10-27
Hugh McClintock died November 4, 1862 ae 60-3-5
Richard Gregg died February 10, 1864 ae 71

Annie Scott Baxter

Approved

Feb. 11th 1937.

Howard Hicks
Distinct Officer
5/11/37